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SUBJECT: Amb. Wisner Outbriefs Contact Group Members in  
Belgrade

¶1. (SBU) Summary: Ambassador Frank Wisner briefed Contact Group representatives in Belgrade April 18 on his recent meetings with the Kosovo negotiating teams and their leadership. He offered a positive assessment of the new leadership in Pristina, noting that Prime Minister Ceku and President Sejdiu were engaging more with the public and preparing Kosovars for the outcome of the talks. Summing up his meetings with Belgrade officials, Wisner said he came away with a better understanding of Belgrade's vision, and that he delivered strong messages to Prime Minister Kostunica, President Tadic, and the negotiating team to participate constructively in the decentralization talks. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) Ambassador Wisner spoke briefly on his visit to Pristina, remarking that the new leadership appears to be preparing its citizens for the ultimate outcome of the Kosovo talks, through speeches and appearances around Kosovo. Wisner said he believes that Pristina is seriously focused on the issues of property, returns, and redrawing municipality borders as it approaches the next talks in Vienna scheduled for May 4.

¶3. (SBU) Meetings with Belgrade officials provided a better understanding of their approach to the Kosovo decentralization talks, Ambassador Wisner said. He made a distinction in his meetings with Kostunica, Tadic, and the negotiating team, between a permanent functional carve-out by Belgrade of Serb municipalities that would tie them to Belgrade's apron strings in perpetuity, or a set of measures to protect the rights of Kosovo Serbs, but preserving Kosovo as a wholly functioning entity. After much discussion, the Belgrade negotiating team reluctantly sought to assure him that Serbia has no intention to insist on a permanent role for Belgrade in the internal affairs of Kosovo Serbs, but rather, that Belgrade's objective is to secure rights and protections for Kosovo Serbs. Wisner had told the Prime Minister, President and the negotiating team that Belgrade's discouragement of Kosovo Serb participation in Kosovo institutions and the CCK directive to withhold salaries for Serbs in Kosovo gave the clear impression that Belgrade was trying to control the Kosovo Serbs.

¶4. (SBU) Ambassador Wisner told the Contact Group that Prime Minister Kostunica continues to oppose the international community's presumed outcome of the Kosovo talks. He also noted that Kostunica sees differences within the Contact Group despite repeated messages that the group stands united in its guiding principles and in its support for UN Special Envoy Ahtisaari's direction in the negotiations.

¶5. (SBU) Based upon his meetings in Kosovo and Belgrade, Ambassador Wisner said he would recommend that Ahtisaari's expert team visit the region to lay the groundwork for the

next round of negotiations in Vienna.

16. (U) Ambassador Wisner's office has cleared this message.  
Post clears this message in its entirety for release to  
Special Envoy Ahtisaari.

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